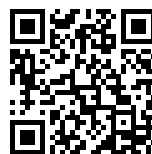


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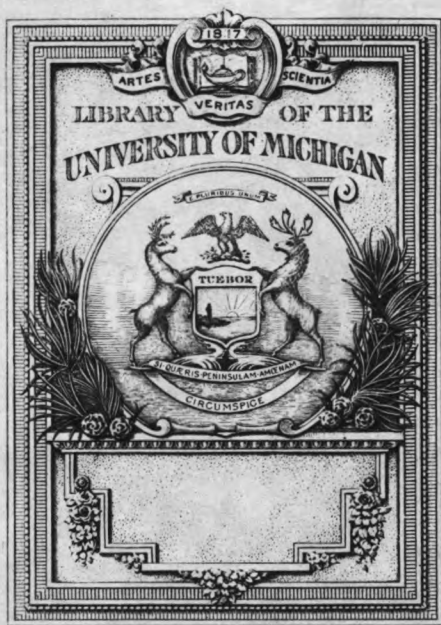
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DARK SUMMER

LOUISE BOGAN







# **DARK SUMMER**





# DARK SUMMER

POEMS

By

LOUISE BOGAN



NEW YORK

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

1929



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**TO**  
***RAYMOND HOLDEN***



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Some of these poems were first published in *Scribner's Magazine*, *The Measure*, *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, "Books" (*The New York Herald Tribune*), *Poetry*, *A Magazine of Verse*, and *The Century*, and thanks are due to the editors for the permission to reprint them, and especially to Robert M. McBride and Company for permission to include in this volume certain poems reprinted from "Body of This Death," published by them in 1923.





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### X







## W I N T E R   S W A N



It is a hollow garden, under the cloud;  
Beneath the heel a hollow earth is turned;  
Within the mind the live blood shouts aloud;  
Under the breast the willing blood is burned,  
Shut with the fire passed and the fire returned.  
But speak, you proud!  
Where lies the leaf-caught world once thought abiding,  
Now but a dry disarray and artifice?  
Here, to the ripple cut by the cold, drifts this  
Bird, the long throat bent back, and the eyes in hiding.

## IF WE TAKE ALL GOLD



If we take all gold  
And put all gold by,  
Lay by the treasure  
In the shelved earth's crevice,  
Under, under the deepest,  
Store sorrow's gold:  
That which we thought precious  
And guarded even in sleep  
Under the miserly pillow,  
If it be hid away  
Lost under dark heaped ground,  
Then shall we have peace,  
Sorrow's gold being taken  
From out the clean house,  
From the rifled coffers put by.

## THE DRUM



THE drum roars up.  
O blood refused,  
Here's your answer.  
The ear is used.

A miss and a beat  
The skin and the stick  
Part and meet,  
Gather thick.

Now they part,  
Now they're meeting.  
There's not on the heart  
So much beating.

Use up the air  
To the last drop,  
To the last layer,  
Before you stop.

Whatever is toward  
It's the drums I'll have,  
Dying a coward  
Or living brave.

## DIVISION



LONG days and changing weather  
Put the shadow upon the door:  
Up from the ground, the duplicate  
Tree reflected in shadow;  
Out from the whole, the single  
Mirrored against the single.  
The tree and the hour and the shadow  
No longer mingle,  
Fly free, that burned together.

Replica, turned to yourself  
Upon thinnest color and air—  
Woven in changeless leaves  
The burden of the seen  
Is clasped against the eye,  
Though assailed and undone is the green  
Upon the wall and the sky:  
Time and the tree stand there.

## CASSANDRA



To me, one silly task is like another.  
I bare the shambling tricks of lust and pride.  
This flesh will never give a child its mother,—  
Song, like a wing, tears through my breast, my side,  
And madness chooses out my voice again,  
Again. I am the chosen no hand saves:  
The shrieking heaven lifted over men,  
Not the dumb earth, wherein they set their graves.

## THE CUPOLA



A MIRROR hangs on the wall of the draughty cupola.  
Within the depths of glass mix the oak and the beech  
leaf,  
Once held to the boughs' shape, but now to the shape of  
the wind.

Someone has hung the mirror here for no reason,  
In the shuttered room, an eye for the drifted leaves,  
For the oak leaf, the beech, a handsbreadth of darkest  
reflection.

Someone has thought alike of the bough and the wind  
And struck their shape to the wall. Each in its season  
Spills negligent death throughout the abandoned cham-  
ber.

## G I R L ' S   S O N G



WINTER, that is a fireless room  
In a locked house, was our love's home.  
The days turn, and you are not here,  
O changing with the little year!

Now when the scent of plants half-grown  
Is more the season's than their own  
And neither sun nor wind can stanch  
The gold forsythia's dripping branch,—

Another maiden, still not I,  
Looks from some hill upon some sky,  
And, since she loves you, and she must,  
Puts her young cheek against the dust.



## FEUERNACHT



THE leaf-veined fire,  
Sworn to trouble the least  
The shuttered eye  
Turned from its feast,—  
Running the night  
In long fanned gush,  
Must burn in that sight  
Less than a rush.

The torch being laid  
And the land kindled,  
And the deepest shade  
Caught fire-brindled;  
The thicket and the bare  
Rock, rising bright—  
The eye in its lair  
Quivers for sight.

To touch at the sedge  
And then run tame  
Is a broken pledge.  
The leaf-shaped flame  
Shears the bark piled for winter,  
The grass in the stall.  
Sworn to lick at a little,  
It has burned all.



## SECOND SONG



I SAID out of sleeping:  
Passion, farewell.  
Take from my keeping  
Bauble and shell,

Black salt, black provender.  
Tender your store  
To a new pensioner,  
To me no more.

## THE MARK



WHERE should he seek, to go away  
That shadow will not point him down?  
The spear of dark in the strong day  
Beyond the upright body thrown,  
Marking no epoch but its own.

Loosed only when, at noon and night,  
The body is the shadow's prison.  
The pivot swings into the light;  
The center left, the shadow risen  
To range out into time's long treason.

Stand pinned to sight, while now, unbidden,  
The apple loosens, not at call,  
Falls to the field, and lies there hidden,—  
Another and another fall  
And lie there hidden, in spite of all

The diagram of whirling shade,  
The visible, that thinks to spin  
Forever webs that time has made  
Though momentarily time wears them thin  
And all at length are gathered in.

## L A T E



THE cormorant still screams  
Over cave and promontory.  
Stony wings and bleak glory  
Battle in your dreams.  
Now sullen and deranged,  
Not simply, as a child,  
You look upon the earth  
And find it harrowed and wild.  
Now, only to mock  
At the sterile cliff laid bare,  
At the cold pure sky unchanged,  
You look upon the rock,  
You look upon the air.

## SIMPLE AUTUMNAL



THE measured blood beats out the year's delay.  
The tearless eyes and heart forbidden grief,  
Watch the burned, restless, but abiding leaf,  
The brighter branches arming the bright day.

The cone, the curving fruit should fall away,  
The vine stem crumble, ripe grain know its sheaf.  
Bonded to time, fires should have done, be brief,  
But, serfs to sleep, they glitter and they stay.

Because not last nor first, grief in its prime  
Wakes in the day, and hears of life's intent.  
Sorrow would break the seal stamped over time  
And set the baskets where the bough is bent.

Full season's come, yet filled trees keep the sky  
And never scent the ground where they must lie.









## THE FLUME



### I

SHE had a madness in her for betrayal.  
She looked for it in every room in the house.  
Sometimes she thought she must rip up the floor to find  
A box, a letter, a ring, to set her grief,  
So long a rusty wheel, revolving in fury.  
But all that she ever found was the noise of water  
Bold in the house as over the dam's flashboard,  
Water as loud as a pulse pressed into the ears,  
Steady as blood in the veins,—often she thought  
The shout her own life,—that she did not listen and hear  
it.

The fields had gone to young grass, the syringa hung  
Stayed by the weight of flowers in the moving morning.  
The shuttered house held coolness a core against  
The hot steeped shrubs at its doors, and the blazing river.  
She in the house, when he had gone to the mill,  
Tried to brush from her heart the gentlest kiss  
New on her mouth. She leaned her broom to the wall,

Ran to the stairs, breathless to start the game  
Of finding agony hid in some corner,  
Tamed, perhaps, by months of pity, but still  
Alive enough to bite at her hands and throat,  
To bruise with a blue, unalterable mark  
The shoulder where she had felt his breath in sleep  
Warm her with its slow measure.

In a mirror

Reflecting a barrow by a neighbor's barn  
And a weather-vane stopped between north and west  
She saw her face, as she had thought to see it,  
Tightened between the eyes. She sat down on the bed  
So that a tree was thrust into the mirror  
Behind her head, and moved there shadowless  
Turning around her the green of its distant leaves.  
She had her two eyes before her, giving her back  
The young face, softly marred by its own derision,  
A hand that settled combs in the heavy hair,  
The willing mouth, kissed never to its own beauty  
Because it strained for terror through the kiss,  
Never quite shaped over the lover's name  
Because that name might go.

The tree moved over  
Its bounded space, and gave some sky to the glass  
Mixed with its leaves. Although the branch rushed loud  
A field off, it was lost within the steady  
Leap of the dam to the flume, made to a silence  
She had heard it so long. Nothing against the cold  
Beat of her own proud purpose was noise or power.

She had some guilt in her to be betrayed,  
She had the terrible hope he could not love her.

The wind before storm was to her the wind before  
thunder.

She heard the break within it from the first.  
She never was afraid to face the heavy  
Sprout of the lightning, for one moment branched  
Within the sultriness of the high pasture  
A little like another tree for a moment  
Gathering through the window not like danger.  
She ran about to shut the windows, slammed  
The doors that gaped along the wall like ears  
And tried to keep herself from the first crash  
To follow the stripped spasm that took root  
On the rocky hill, in the field, or in the water.  
She needed more than a house to keep it out.  
She clung to the wall, and smelled the dusty paper  
Beside her face, and counted out the figures  
Into a spell, to keep her terror hushed,  
And clenched herself so tightly that she thought  
Nothing could make her hear that noise again,  
And again heard, spun down throughout the valley,  
The spill from the long sky, over the roof,  
Mounting as surely as the beats in pain.  
The thunder was like agony, a smother  
Against her life: she thought never to stand

Out in the free still air again, and buy  
A loaf of bread out of the baker's cart,  
Or cut the lamp-wicks in the early morning,  
Or carry in the biggest lamp at night  
Shining and clean under the china shade  
To light the dishes of the supper table.

—Still—still—everything quieter then  
Than the very earth escaping under the plough,  
The depth beyond seed of the still and deep-layered  
ground  
Stiller than rock, than the blackest base of rock,  
Than the central grain crushed tight within the mountain.

It would be still again. She could say to-night  
"There has been a storm," as though he hadn't heard  
The hundred breaks within the murderous sky,  
And he would say that thunder couldn't hurt her.  
"There's been a storm," she would say. "Trees have  
been struck,

"Maybe a man stunned in an open field.  
"The milk in the cows' udders curdled sour."  
One woman frightened in a dusty corner  
Who bit her fist and wished to pluck the thunder  
From its swinging tree, to throw it down forever  
Against the pastures it could not destroy,

And after the thunder, run and stop the dam,  
The endless fountainous roar of falling water,  
And scratch her heart free from the itching love  
So much like sound, never spending itself,  
Never still, in any quietest room.  
The thunder ended. She could hear the others:  
The water that wrapped the house like a shawly vine,  
Love like a rough wind mixing a branch's stems.  
The thunder had stopped. Some day she could stand  
Listening yet, with the others silent around her.

### III

At night his calm closed body lay beside her  
 Beyond her will established in itself.  
 Barely a moment before he had said her name,  
 Giving it into sleep, had set the merciful  
 Bulwark of spare young body against the darkness.  
 Her hair sweeps over his shoulder, claiming him hers,  
 This fine and narrow strength, although her hands  
 Lie, shut untenderly by her own side.  
 Her woman's flesh, rocking all echoes deep,  
 Strains out again toward ravenous memory.  
 He lies in sleep, slender, a broken seal,  
 The strong wrists quick no more to the strong hand,  
 The intent eyes dulled, the obstinate mouth kissed out.  
 Outside the dam roars. He is perhaps a child,  
 With a child's breath. He lies flexed like a child,  
 The strong ribs and firm neck may count for nothing.  
 She will think him a child. He is weak and he will fail her.

Again she remembers the girl on the edge of town  
 Who took her lovers out along autumn roads,  
 Under half-empty trees, and shouted her laughter  
 To hear an echo thinner, later than summer's,  
 Answer her from the fields. Again she remembers  
 The true hard cold that caught at the wild girl's body,



When night after night she felt the autumn break  
And open the country she knew, when she gave her kisses  
Beside rough field-stones piled into a wall  
Cold as the wind in every particle.  
She had been that girl, this woman in a house,  
Who well might have no bed. He had given her walls  
She wished to burn, his body she wished to tear  
Ever upon the knife of another's body.  
He was the dark, he was the house and sound.

One morning she saw how the first autumn had  
changed  
The splayed repeated figures on the ground  
Making them leaves, and not the shadow of leaves.

IV

She has been away. She shuts the heavy door  
 Against the stars of the late afternoon.  
 The fine fire in the kitchen warms the hall  
 And has turned the stove lids golden-red. Such burning!  
 Oh, equal to the terror of the cold  
 Biting itself outside, like a maddened thing,  
 Its tooth and fury matched. The lamp flames clearly  
 Against its glassed-in air. Nothing has changed.  
 Table and floor have been swept clean enough.  
 She pulls the frozen patch of veil from her mouth  
 And stands, like a stranger, muffled from the cold  
 To which she may return. Where is this treachery  
 That she has come home earlier to find  
 Wide in her house? It has not tracked the floors  
 Nor strewn crumbs on the shelves. It is hid away.

Begin to turn, you whirring stone in the breast;  
 Beat again, unsated pulse of fury.  
 He will soon be here. Give her before he comes  
 Whet to the blade. Lie open to her eye;  
 Rustle against her ear; give her mean glory  
 Of treason found outside the treacherous heart.  
 —No moon is close against the empty windows  
 To fill the cold hand of the air. The cold stairs murmur

In all their boards and nails, under her feet.  
Her breath shows white over the lamp she carries  
And sets by the bed. The panes shine back  
As though there were nothing but a precipice  
Beyond the wall, and the house itself a shelter  
Held over space. She stands within the panes  
As in the room, coated, the veil on her cheeks,  
Save that there darkness streams behind her body  
And through it. She almost knows the change  
She could not know until now, so recently  
The whistling cold outside beat down her sense.  
But now she is snared. She tries to take a step  
Toward the clumsily smoothed bed, and waits half-  
balanced,  
Even her anger checked. Now all is over.  
Her blood still beats, but everything else is still.  
She stands in an empty room, in a silent room.  
The ear has stopped. Great quietude spells the throb  
Expected, because here the water sounded,  
Because of it the bed and chairs stood here.  
She stands here, too, because she once heard water  
Night or day, go down in a bristling swing,—  
Water now like stone over the dam,  
And in the flume below, that once ran black  
And marked its current with the earliest stalks  
Of summer broken, the water might be the ground.

No longer the echo of frenzy bound on itself  
Answers her from below. She and the mirror  
Can play no longer together their bitter game.  
Here now is silence, over the earth as beneath it,  
The rim of the cymbal frozen, the drum gone slack.

And here at last the lust for betrayal breaks.  
Her blood beats on, and her love with her blood  
Beats back the staring coldness that would kill her,  
Laying a palm over the ebb and return  
Of her warm throat, heard now for the first time  
Within this room. Soon he will find her,  
Still dressed for flight, quiet upon his bed,  
When he has hurried from the weighted cold  
Toward the faint lamp upstairs. She will lie there  
Hearing at last the timbre of love and silence.







## M E D U S A



I HAD come to the house, in a cave of trees,  
Facing a sheer sky.  
Everything moved,—a bell hung ready to strike,  
Sun and reflection wheeled by.

When the bare eyes were before me  
And the hissing hair,  
Held up at a window, seen through a door.  
The stiff bald eyes, the serpents on the forehead  
Formed in the air.

This is a dead scene forever now.  
Nothing will ever stir.  
The end will never brighten it more than this,  
Nor the rain blur.

The water will always fall, and will not fall,  
And the tipped bell make no sound.  
The grass will always be growing for hay  
Deep on the ground.



And I shall stand here like a shadow  
Under the great balanced day,  
My eyes on the yellow dust, that was lifting in the wind,  
And does not drift away.

## SUB CONTRA



NOTES on the tuned frame of strings  
Plucked or silenced under the hand  
Whimper lightly to the ear,  
Delicate and involute,  
Like the mockery in a shell.  
Lest the brain forget the thunder  
The roused heart once made it hear,—  
Rising as that clamor fell,—  
Let there sound from music's root  
One note rage can understand,  
A fine noise of riven things.  
Build there some thick chord of wonder;  
Then, for every passion's sake,  
Beat upon it till it break.

## AD CASTITATEM



I MAKE the old sign.  
I invoke you,  
Chastity.  
Life moves no more  
A breeze of flame.  
Alike upon the ground,  
Struck by the same withering,  
Lie the fruitful and the barren branch;  
Alike over them  
Closes the mould.  
I call upon you,  
Who have not known you;  
I invoke you,  
Stranger though I be.  
Against this blackened heart  
I hold your offerings—  
Water, and a stone.

In this ravaged country,  
In this season not yours,  
You having no season,  
I call upon you without echo.  
Hear me, infertile,  
Beautiful futility.

## PO R T R A I T



SHE has no need to fear the fall  
Of harvest from the laddered reach  
Of orchards, nor the tide gone ebbing  
From the steep beach—

Nor hold to pain's effrontery  
Her body's bulwark, stern and savage,  
Nor be a glass, where to foresee  
Another's ravage.

What she has gathered, and what lost,  
She will not find to lose again.  
She is possessed by time, who once  
Was loved by men.

## THE ROMANTIC



ADMIT the ruse to fix and name her chaste  
With those who sleep the spring through, one and one,  
Cool nights, when laurel builds up, without haste,  
Its precise flower, like a pentagon.

In her obedient breast, all that ran free  
You thought to bind, like echoes in a shell.  
At the year's end, you promised, it would be  
The unstrung leaves, and not her heart, that fell.

So the year broke and vanished on the screen  
You cast about her; summer went to haws.  
This, by your leave, is what she should have been,—  
Another man will tell you what she was.

•  
THE ALCHEMIST



I BURNED my life, that I might find  
A passion wholly of the mind,  
Thought divorced from eye and bone,  
Ecstasy come to breath alone.  
I broke my life, to seek relief  
From the flawed light of love and grief.

With mounting beat the utter fire  
Charred existence and desire.  
It died low, ceased its sudden thresh.  
I had found unmysterious flesh—  
Not the mind's avid substance—still  
Passionate beyond the will.

MEN LOVED WHOLLY BEYOND  
WISDOM



MEN loved wholly beyond wisdom  
Have the staff without the banner.  
Like a fire in a dry thicket,  
Rising within women's eyes  
Is the love men must return.  
Heart, so subtle now, and trembling,  
What a marvel to be wise,  
To love never in this manner!  
To be quiet in the fern  
Like a thing gone dead and still,  
Listening to the prisoned cricket  
Shake its terrible, dissembling  
Music in the granite hill.



## STANZA



No longer burn the hands that seized  
Small wreaths from branches scarcely green.  
Wearily sleeps the hardy, lean  
Hunger that could not be appeased.  
The eyes that opened to white day  
Watch cloud that men may look upon:  
Leda forgets the wings of the swan;  
Danaë has swept the gold away.

CHANSON UN PEU NAÏVE



WHAT body can be ploughed,  
Sown, and broken yearly?  
She would not die, she vowed,  
But she has, nearly.

Sing, heart, sing,  
Call and carol clearly.

And, since she could not die,  
Care would be a feather,  
A film over the eye  
Of two that lie together.

Fly, song, fly,  
Break your little tether.

So, from strength concealed  
She makes her pretty boast:  
Pain is a furrow healed  
And she may love you most.

Cry, song, cry,  
And hear your crying lost.

## FIFTEENTH FAREWELL



### I

You may have all things from me, save my breath.  
The slight life in my throat will not give pause  
For your love, nor your loss, nor any cause.  
Shall I be made a panderer to death,  
Dig the green ground for darkness underneath,  
Let the dust serve me, covering all that was  
With all that will be? Better, from time's claws,  
The hardened face under the subtle wreath.

Cooler than stones in wells, sweeter, more kind  
Than hot, perfidious words, my breathing moves  
Close to my plunging blood. Be strong, and hang  
Unriven mist over my breast and mind,  
My breath! We shall forget the heart that loves,  
Though in my body beat its blade, and its fang.

I erred, when I thought loneliness the wide  
 Scent of mown grass over forsaken fields,  
 Or any shadow isolation yields.  
 Loneliness was the heart within your side.  
 Your thought, beyond my touch, was tilted air  
 Ringed with as many borders as the wind.  
 How could I judge you gentle or unkind  
 When all bright flying space was in your care?

Now that I leave you, I shall be made lonely  
 By simple empty days,—never that chill  
 Resonant heart to strike between my arms  
 Again, as though distraught for distance,—only  
 Levels of evening, now, behind a hill,  
 Or a late cock-crow from the darkening farms.

SINCE YOU WOULD CLAIM THE  
SOURCES OF MY THOUGHT



SINCE you would claim the sources of my thought  
Recall the meshes whence it sprang unlimed,  
The reedy traps which other hands have timed  
To close upon it; conjure up the hot  
Blaze that it cleared so cleanly, or the snow  
Devised to strike it down. It will be free.  
Whatever nets draw in to prison me,  
At length your eyes must turn to watch it go.

My mouth, perhaps, may learn one thing too well,  
My body hear no echo save its own,  
Yet will the desperate mind, maddened and proud,  
Seek out the storm, escape the bitter spell  
That we obey, strain to the wind, be thrown  
Straight to its freedom in the thunderous cloud.





## DARK SUMMER



UNDER the thunder-dark, the cicadas resound.  
The storm in the sky mounts, but is not yet heard.  
The shaft and the flash wait, but are not yet found.

The apples that hang and swell for the late comer,  
The simple spell, the rite not for our word,  
The kisses not for our mouths,—light the dark summer.



## FOR A MARRIAGE



SHE gives most dangerous sight  
To keep his life awake:  
A sword sharp-edged and bright  
That darkness must not break,  
Not ever for her sake.

With it he sees, deep-hidden,  
The sullen other blade  
To every eye forbidden,  
That half her life has made,  
And until now obeyed.

Now he will know his part:  
Tougher than bone or wood,  
To clasp on that barbed heart  
That once shed its own blood  
In its own solitude.

## DIDACTIC PIECE



THE eye unacquitted by whatever it holds in allegiance:  
The trees' upcurve thought sacred, the flaked air, sacred  
and alterable,  
The hard bud seen under the lid, not the scorned leaf  
and the apple—  
As once in a swept space, so now with speech in a house,  
We think to stand spelled forever, chained to the rigid  
knocking  
Of a heart whose time is its own flesh, momentarily swung  
and burning—  
This, in peace, as well, though we know the air a com-  
batant  
And the word of the heart's wearing time, that it will  
not do without grief.

The limit already traced must be returned to and visited,  
Touched, spanned, proclaimed, else the heart's time be  
all:

The small beaten disk, under the bent shell of stars,  
Beside rocks in the road, dust, and the nameless herbs,  
Beside rocks in the water, marked by the heeled-back  
current,  
Seeing, in all autumns, the felled leaf betray the wind.

If but the sign of the end is given a room  
By the pillared harp, sealed to its rest by hands—  
(On the bright strings the hands are almost reflected,  
The strings a mirror and light). The head bends to  
listen,  
So that the grief is heard; tears begin and are silenced  
Because of the mimic despair, under the figure of laugh-  
ter.  
Let the allegiance go; the tree and the hard bud seed  
themselves.  
The end is set, whether it be sought or relinquished.  
We wait, we hear, facing the mask without eyes,  
Grief without grief, facing the eyeless music.

## TEARS IN SLEEP



ALL night the cocks crew, under a moon like day,  
And I, in the cage of sleep, on a stranger's breast,  
Shed tears, like a task not to be put away—  
In the false light, false grief in my happy bed,  
A labor of tears, set against joy's undoing.  
I would not wake at your word, I had tears to say.  
I clung to the bars of the dream and they were said,  
And pain's derisive hand had given me rest  
From the night giving off flames, and the dark renewing.

## SONG FOR A SLIGHT VOICE



If ever I render back your heart  
So long to me delight and plunder,  
It will be bound with the firm strings  
That men have built the viol under.

Your stubborn, piteous heart, that bent  
To be the place where music stood,  
Upon some shaken instrument  
Stained with the dark of resinous blood,

Will find its place, beyond denial,  
Will hear the dance, O be most sure,  
Laid on the curved wood of the viol  
Or on the struck tambour.

## THE CROSSED APPLE



I've come to give you fruit from out my orchard,  
Of wide report.  
I have trees there that bear me many apples  
Of every sort:

Clear, streakèd; red and russet; green and golden;  
Sour and sweet.  
This apple's from a tree yet unbeholden,  
Where two kinds meet,—

So that this side is red without a dapple,  
And this side's hue  
Is clear and snowy. It's a lovely apple.  
It is for you.

Within are five black pips as big as peas,  
As you will find,  
Potent to breed you five great apple trees  
Of varying kind:

To breed you wood for fire, leaves for shade,  
Apples for sauce.

Oh, this is a good apple for a maid,  
It is a cross,

Fine on the finer, so the flesh is tight,  
And grained like silk.

Sweet Burning gave the red side, and the white  
Is Meadow Milk.

Eat it; and you will taste more than the fruit:  
The blossom, too,  
The sun, the air, the darkness at the root,  
The rain, the dew,

The earth we come to, and the time we flee,  
The fire and the breast.  
I claim the white part, maiden, that's for me.  
You take the rest.

## SONNET



DARK, underground, is furnished with the bone;  
The tool's lost, and the counter in the game.  
Eaten as though by water or by flame  
The elaborate craft built up from wood and stone.

Words made of breath, these also are undone,  
And greedy sight abolished in its claim.  
Light fails from ruin and from wall the same;  
The loud sound and pure silence fall as one.

Worn flesh at last is history and treasure  
Unto itself; its scars it still can keep,  
Received from love, from memory's false measure,  
From pain, from the long dream drawn back in sleep.

Attest, poor body, with what scars you have,  
That you left life, to come down to the grave.



## FIEND'S WEATHER



O EMBITTERED joy,  
You fiend in fair weather,  
Foul winds from secret quarters  
Howl here together.

They yell without sleet  
And freeze without snow;  
Through them the broken Pleiades  
And the Brothers show,

And Orion's steel,  
And the iron of the Plough.  
This is your night, my worthy fiend,  
You can triumph now.

In this wind to wrench the eye  
And curdle the ear,  
The church steeple rises purely to the heavens;  
The sky is clear.

And even to-morrow  
Stones without disguise  
In true-colored fields  
Will glitter for your eyes.

## I SAW ETERNITY



O BEAUTIFUL Forever!  
O grandiose Everlasting!  
Now, now, now,  
I break you into pieces,  
I feed you to the ground.

O brilliant, O languishing  
Cycle of weeping light!  
The mice and birds will eat you,  
And you will spoil their stomachs  
As you have spoiled my mind.

Here, mice, rats,  
Porcupines and toads,  
Moles, shrews, squirrels,  
Weasels, turtles, lizards,—  
Here's bright Everlasting!  
Here's a crumb of Forever!  
Here's a crumb of Forever!

## COME, BREAK WITH TIME



COME, break with time,  
You who were lorded  
By a clock's chime  
So ill afforded.  
If time is allayed  
Be not afraid.

*I shall break, if I will.*  
Break, since you must.  
Time has its fill,  
Sated with dust.  
Long the clock's hand  
Burned like a brand.

Take the rocks' speed  
And earth's heavy measure.  
Let buried seed  
Drain out time's pleasure,  
Take time's decrees.  
Come, cruel ease.

## OLD COUNTRYSIDE



BEYOND the hour we counted rain that fell  
On the slant shutter, all has come to proof.  
The summer thunder, like a wooden bell,  
Rang in the storm above the mansard roof,

And mirrors cast the cloudy day along  
The attic floor; wind made the clapboards creak.  
You braced against the wall to make it strong,  
A shell against your cheek.

Long since, we pulled brown oak-leaves to the ground  
In a winter of dry trees; we heard the cock  
Shout its unplaceable cry, the axe's sound  
Delay a moment after the axe's stroke.

Far back, we saw, in the stillest of the year,  
The scrawled vine shudder, and the rose-branch show  
Red to the thorns, and, sharp as sight can bear,  
The thin hound's body arched against the snow.







## SUMMER WISH



*That cry's from the first cuckoo  
of the year.  
I wished before it ceased.*

### FIRST VOICE

WE call up the green to hide us  
This hardened month, by no means the beginning  
Of the natural year, but of the shortened span  
Of leaves upon the earth. We call upon  
The weed as well as the flower: groundsel, stellaria.  
It is the month to make the summer wish;  
It is time to ask  
The wish from summer as always: *It will be,*  
*It will be.*

That tool we have used  
So that its haft is smooth; it knows the hand.  
Again we lift the wish to its expert uses,  
Tired of the bird that calls one long note downward,  
And the forest in cast-iron. No longer, no longer,  
The season of the lying equinox  
Wherein false cock-crow sounds!



## SECOND VOICE

In March the shadow  
Already falls with a look of summer, fuller  
Upon the snow, because the sun at last  
Is almost centered. Later, the sprung moss  
Is the tree's shadow; under the black spruces  
It lies where lately snow lay, bred green from the cold  
Cast down from melting branches.

## FIRST VOICE

A wish like a hundred others.  
You cannot, as once, yearn forward. The blood now never  
Stirs hot to memory, or to the fantasy  
Of love, with which, both early and late, one lies  
As with a lover.  
Now do you suddenly envy  
Poor praise you told long since to keep its tongue,  
Or pride's acquired accent,—pomposity, arrogance,  
That trip in their latinity? With these at heart  
You could make a wish, crammed with the nobility  
Of error. It would be no use. You cannot  
Take yourself in.

## SECOND VOICE

Count over what these days have: lilies  
Returned in little to an earth unready,  
To the sun not accountable;  
The hillside mazed and leafless, but through the ground  
The leaf from the bulb, the unencouraged green  
Heaving the metal earth, presage of thousand  
Shapes of young leaves—lanceolate, trefoil,  
Peach, willow, plum, the lilac like a heart.

## FIRST VOICE

Memory long since put by,—to what end the dream  
That drags back lived-out life with the wrong words,  
The substitute meaning?  
Those that you once knew there play out false time,  
Elaborate yesterday's words, that they were deaf to,  
Being dead ten years.—Call back in anguish  
The anger in childhood that defiled the house  
In walls and timber with its violence?  
Now must you listen again  
To your own tears, shed as a child, hold the bruise  
With your hand, and weep, fallen against the wall,  
And beg, *Don't, don't*, while the pitiful rage goes on  
That cannot stem itself?  
Or, having come into woman's full estate,

Enter the rich field, walk between the bitter  
Bowed grain, being compelled to serve,  
To heed unchecked in the heart the reckless fury  
That tears fresh day from day, destroys its traces,—  
Now bear the blow too young?

SECOND VOICE

In early April  
At six o'clock the sun has not set; on the walls  
It shines with scant light, pale, dilute, misplaced,  
Light there's no use for. At overcast noon  
The sun comes out in a flash, and is taken  
Slowly back to the cloud.

FIRST VOICE

Not memory, and not the renewed conjecture  
Of passion that opens the breast, the unguarded look  
Flaying clean the raped defence of the body,  
Breast, bowels, throat, now pulled to the use of the eyes  
That see and are taken. The body that works and sleeps,  
Made vulnerable, night and day, to delight that changes  
Upon the lips that taste it, to the lash of jealousy  
Struck on the face, so the betraying bed  
Is gashed clear, cold on the mind, together with  
Every embrace that agony dreads but sees  
Open as the love of dogs.

## SECOND VOICE

The cloud shadow flies up the bank, but does not  
Blow off like smoke. It stops at the bank's edge.  
In the field by trees two shadows come together.  
The trees and the cloud throw down their shadow upon  
The man who walks there. Dark flows up from his feet  
To his shoulders and throat, then has his face in its mask,  
Then lifts.

## FIRST VOICE

Will you turn to yourself, proud breast,  
Sink to yourself, to an ingrained, pitiless  
Rejection of voice and touch not your own, press sight  
Into a myth no eye can take the gist of;  
Clot up the bone of phrase with the black conflict  
That claws it back from sense?

Go into the breast . . .

You have traced that lie, before this, out to its end,  
Heard bright wit headstrong in the beautiful voice  
Changed to a word mumbled across the shoulder  
To one not there; the gentle self split up

Into a yelling fiend and a soft child.  
You have seen the ingrown look  
Come at last upon a vision too strong  
Ever to turn away.

The breast's six madnesses repeat their dumb-show.

#### SECOND VOICE

In the bright twilight children call out in the fields.  
The evening takes their cry. How late it is!  
Around old weeds worn thin and bleached to their pith  
The field has leaped to stalk and strawberry blossom.  
The orchard by the road  
Has the pear-tree full at once of flowers and leaves,  
The cherry with flowers only.

#### FIRST VOICE

The mind for refuge, the grain of reason, the will,  
Pulled by a wind it thinks to point and name?  
Malicious symbol, key for rusty wards,  
The crafty knight in the game, with its mixed move,  
Prey to an end not evident to craft. . . .

## SECOND VOICE

Fields are ploughed inward  
From edge to center; furrows squaring off  
Make dark lines far out in irregular fields,  
On hills that are builded like great clouds that over them  
Rise, to depart.

Furrow within furrow, square within a square,  
Draw to the center where the team turns last.  
Horses in half-ploughed fields  
Make earth they walk upon a changing color.

## FIRST VOICE

The year's begun; the share's again in the earth.

Speak out the wish like music, that has within it  
The horn, the string, the drum pitched deep as grief.  
Speak it like laughter, outward. O brave, O generous  
Laughter that pours from the well of the body and draws  
The bane that cheats the heart: aconite, nightshade,  
Hellebore, hyssop, rue,—symbols and poisons  
We drink, in fervor, thinking to gain thereby  
Some difference, some distinction.  
Speak it, as that man said, *as though the earth spoke,*

By the body of rock, shafts of heaved strata, separate,  
Together.

Though it be but for sleep at night,  
Speak out the wish.  
The vine we pitied is in leaf; the wild  
Honeysuckle blows by the granite.

SECOND VOICE

See now  
Open above the field, stilled in wing-stiffened flight,  
The stretched hawk fly.









